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VIEWS OF SLAVERY,

IN ITS EFFECTS ON THE

WEALTH, POPULATION, AND CHARACTER

OF NATIONS.

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VIEWS OF SLAVERY, &c.

The influence of slavery on the human character, is manifestly unfavorable to habits of industry and the acquisition of skill. The slave, devoid of the stimulus to exertion arising from the hope of reward, will naturally be disposed to indulge his love of ease. When compelled to labor, he will move reluctantly, and with less vigor and energy than he who is inspired by a consciousness of freedom, and the expectation of reward. Hence an enervating lethargy is spread over all his movements, and his habitual exertions are much less effective than those of the free laborer. He also works with less skill; for having but little inducement to increase the produce of his labor, he does not strive equally to improve himself, and become dexterous in the performance of manual operations. The masters, too, being generally unaccustomed to labor, and educated without that intimate acquaintance with the manual operations of business, which is necessary to qualify them for planning and directing such operations to the best advantage, are unable to supply the defects of their operatives, and consequently the labor of the slaves is not only less in effective power than that of freemen, but it is also directed with less skill. The system of slavery is also admirably adapted to foster in the breast of the master, and others who aspire to an equality with him, a feeling of contempt for, and aversion to, labor, as well as to encourage careless waste and extravagance in the families of the masters. They live as it were from hand to mouth; plentifully, while fertile land is abundant in proportion to their numbers; but as this becomes exhausted in its fertility, or occupied by increasing multitudes, they

are necessitated in some measure to forego their accustomed enjoyments.

From the foregoing circumstances, it necessarily follows that the accumulation of capital goes on slowly in a slave district. There is both an inability and an indisposition to vest much stock in facilitating future productions. But little is laid out in improvements upon the land, or in providing tools and machinery to increase the productive power of labor. Hence, in process of time, their resources are gradually, but certainly dried up; the land becomes poor, their dwellings go to decay, and the whole country exhibits the aspect of approaching desolation.

In consequence of the want of energy and skill in the laborers, of business habits and operative knowledge in the masters, and of the advantages which the judicious application of capital gives to production, the annual produce of the land and labor of a slaveholding district, is vastly less in quantity than what is common in others possessing equal advantages by nature, where free labor is employed. If to this we add the loss of labor which the nation suffers from the disgrace which is attached to the pursuits of industry, we may have an idea of the immense inferiority of a slaveholding district in the command which the people collectively possess over the necessities and comforts of life. And although the allowance of the slaves may be reduced even lower than is consistent with common humanity, it is highly probable that, in general, they consume a greater proportion of the produce of their labor than usually falls to the lot of the hired laborer; and it is certain that the utmost that can be wrung from them, is, in general, less than the profits that are derived from

the employment of hired laborers, where the natural advantages are equally great, and workmen not peculiarly scarce.— This is particularly the case in manufactures, where skill and assiduity are necessary to success; for in them, generally, mere animal power is of comparatively little avail, when contrasted with dexterity, skill, and the judicious application of capital. Hence it is, that manufactures never have, nor never can prosper in a slave district. The few rude articles that are made by the hands of slaves, cannot stand a competition in the market with those manufactured beyond the influence of slavery, unless they possess some very great advantages in situation or otherwise. Consequently, if a slave district was destitute of commercial intercourse with others of a different character, the people must be poorly accommodated with the necessities and comforts of life. A large proportion of the laborers must be employed in preparing the few rude articles of manufacture that they would be able to procure, and the cultivators of the soil would have to give a large portion of the rude produce of the land for the very imperfect accommodations which the low state of the arts could furnish. A body of thriving artisans, manufacturers, and merchants, sufficient to form a profitable market for the agriculturists, could not be raised up. The whole value of the annual produce would be comparatively small; and of course, when the profits of the different kinds of business were equalized, they would all be very scanty, and poverty would be the common lot of the inhabitants, with few exceptions.

Almost the only business that is found to afford a profit when carried on by the slaves, is agriculture; and even this cannot succeed on an extensive field, except it is favored by nature, either by unusual fertility of soil, or by the nature of its productions. But agriculture cannot be profitable unless there is a good market for its produce; and such a market cannot originate in a slave district. It is upon the capital, skill, and enterprise of other countries, that the slaveholder must mainly rely for a market to absorb his surplus produce, and to furnish him with the various manufactured articles he re-

quires. Upon them, therefore, depends, in a great measure, the ability to obtain the conveniences and comforts of life; and it is to them that the slaveholder is indebted for the greater part of the value that is attached to his land. Low as the land is rated in the slave states, in proportion to its capability of producing, it would certainly be much lower if all commercial intercourse with more wealthy countries was interdicted.

But the slaveholding agriculturist cannot obtain a foreign market for his produce, unless he can raise such articles as are in extensive demand, and which will at the same time bear the expense of transportation. These properties belong only, in a very limited degree, to the common articles of food that are produced in temperate climates. These, from their weight and other circumstances, can never become the staples of a very extensive foreign trade. The quantity of them that can be exported or received by any country of large extent, will always bear a very small proportion to that which must be consumed or produced at home; and therefore, they can never regularly supply the exporting agriculturist with the various things he must necessarily purchase, in order to conform to our ideas of comfortable living. It is for this reason that the raising of these articles can never be sufficiently profitable to encourage and enable the farmers to procure slaves for cultivating the soil, unless it is in limited districts, peculiarly favored by natural fertility. Hence it was that the system of slavery could not take deep root in those parts of our country whose soil and climate were not adapted to the production of other articles than provisions. The raising of these can never be profitable on a large space, until an advantageous home market is created, for the greater part of the surplus produce of the cultivators; and this, as we have seen, can never be furnished by the slave system. It was this circumstance, more than any thing else, which saved the middle and northern states of this confederacy from being deeply infected with the curse of slavery. Though so well adapted to the increase of wealth and population, that they have exhibited a pro-

gress probably unparalleled in the annals of the human race; they could furnish no rude produce for a foreign market that would pay the expense of slave cultivation on a large scale, and thus, fortunately for the present and future generations, the early settlers could not afford to buy slaves in sufficient numbers to make that system a prevailing feature in the constitution of the body politic.

It was otherwise in portions of the Southern States, and in the West Indies. The staple productions of those countries were such as could not be advantageously produced in Europe, and for which there was a great and growing demand. Their cultivation was profitable, and admitted of extension, so as to constitute a greater part of the surplus produce of the planters; and hence the quantity exported was sufficient to purchase most of the manufactured articles they required. This created a great demand for slaves, and at the same time furnished the means of purchasing them; and as hired laborers were scarce, the slave system prevailed, and gave a tone to the state of society peculiarly calculated to discourage the migration of free laborers to those countries, so that the character of the people and the destinies of a large portion of the continent has been moulded in an unfortunate manner by these circumstances.

If the foregoing reasoning is correct, it is evident that the main support and nourishment of the slave system has been an extensive and profitable distant market for the sugar, cotton, tobacco, &c. of the South. And that if all commercial intercourse was suspended, so that the slaveholders had not the opportunity of profiting by the superior industry, skill, and capital of countries less favored by nature than their own, they would soon find the profits of their business nearly annihilated, and the value of their land depreciated to a mere trifle. General poverty would induce or compel them to part with their slaves, and at the same time prepare them for associating with the descendants of Africa on terms approaching to equality.— Thus slavery would probably disappear in a few generations, in spite of the utmost efforts of its friends to support it, and a general amalgamation of the two

racess would put an end to the prevailing prejudice against color. This amalgamation is a necessary result of the continuance of the slave system, until it is removed by the operation of the laws of nature. Nothing, it is believed, can arrest its progress but an extermination of one of the races, or an abandonment of the system of iniquity.

INFLUENCE OF SLAVERY ON POPULATION.

The aggregate annual produce of the land and labor of a slave district, is much less than is common in others of equal extent and natural advantages, where slavery does not exist; and the system naturally produces a kind of management characterized by careless waste and extravagance. Consequently, such a district will never support as great a population as will naturally grow up under the genial smile of freedom; for the number of people in any given space cannot be permanently greater than what the annual produce will support in the mode required by their existing habits. The increase of capital is also much less rapid in such a district, than in one where freedom prevails, (other things being equal;) and consequently, the additional numbers that can be supported each year will be less; so that a slaveholding district will not increase in population as rapidly as others, nor can it ever arrive at the same degree of wealth and power that is attainable by those that are so fortunate as to be clear of this withering curse. A strong check to the natural power of increase must, therefore, commence operation at an early period. While fertile land is abundant in proportion to the population, and a profitable market can be found for its staple productions, it is possible that even the wasteful extravagance and want of skill so manifest in the economy of the slave system, may provide for increasing numbers, so as to allow of a rapid increase of population; and, perhaps, under very favorable circumstances, the whole power of natural increase may be put forth. But this state of things cannot be of long duration, as the good land will soon become occupied, and its fertility begin to decline. The power of production must, therefore, increase less rapidly, and ere long come to a stand, or commence a retrograde course.

But the tendency of the people to increase still continues, so that greater numbers will be brought into being than can be supported with the habits that were formed in more plentiful times. Hence, the rising generation will find insuperable difficulties in the way of obtaining settlements at an early age, that will enable them to live comfortably, according to the ideas with which they have been educated. The masters are, therefore, operated upon by powerful motives to avoid the incumbence of a family: particularly, as pride, prejudice, and custom will not allow them to resort to manual labor of any kind for a support. Many, therefore, will remain unmarried to a late period in life, and some altogether; while others, more enterprising, will emigrate in search of more favorable situations, or to avoid the humiliation of exhibiting their declining fortunes to their old associates. Thus the increase of the masters will be opposed by a constant and powerful check, which will keep the numbers of the race down to that which can be supported in ease, if not in affluence, by the pittance that can be wrung from the labor of the slaves; operating under all the disadvantages incident to the declining state of affairs. The number of those who live upon the labor of slaves must, therefore, soon come to a stand, or begin to decrease, after all the land applicable to the purpose is taken into tillage.

As regards the slaves, they are not in a situation to be affected by that check to population, arising from the apprehension of not being able to support a family. It is the master's business to provide for the future; and the slaves literally take no thought for the morrow, in relation to the important concern of continuing their race. They, therefore, increase and multiply without restraint; and so long as a market exists for them as slaves, so that the masters can dispose of their supernumerary ones, they will be encouraged to do so; and thus an old settled slave district will annually send forth its droves of human cattle, to gratify the avarice of the white man in more favored regions, and to the disgrace of the Christian name. This drain for the supernumerary slaves, or some other that will

answer the same purpose, seems the only circumstance that can give perpetuity to the system of slavery. The tendency which slaves generally possess to increase beyond the means of the masters to find support or profitable employment, will soon involve the latter in inextricable difficulties, unless some means are devised to counteract it. Among these means there is none so likely to be resorted to, or so effectual as the sale and transportation of the superfluous numbers, so long as a market is open for them. The present state of things in the older slave States might possibly continue for centuries, if an opening could be found for the sale of the transported slaves; so that, while the number of the masters would remain nearly stationary, or probably declining, the slaves would put forth nearly their full power of increase. Thus the droves and cargoes that might be sent away from our Southern States in the course of a few centuries would be sufficient to blacken half the globe, and leave about as many there at the end of the time as would be existing if none had been removed, provided the masters were able to devise and introduce some other mode of keeping down their numbers, so as to maintain their authority. It is true the hardships and privations that the slaves would naturally have to endure, in consequence of the failure of their masters' resources, would tend in a considerable degree to keep down their numbers: but experience proves that those suffering from mere want must be very great indeed, where prudential considerations do not operate, before it will prevent children from being raised sufficient to occasion a considerable accession of population. And it is not likely that if no other check than this is adopted, the masters can long maintain their authority.

It appears, therefore, that the system of slavery has a tendency to prevent the increase of the masters in a greater degree than that of the slaves; and that as regards our own country, it is calculated to give the black race a great and unnatural preponderance at a future time in many of the finest portions of the Union.

This is an important consideration for a statesman who looks to the future well-being of our country, and shows that it is a

subject which interests the North as well as the South. The principle here laid down has been corroborated by facts, but the lights which history furnishes on the subject are so faint that it is not exhibited as clearly as it no doubt would be, if we were intimately acquainted with the circumstances, in each case. The Israelites in Egypt must have multiplied much faster than their oppressors, or the facts related of them could not have taken place. And the Turks who have in a considerable degree endeavored to live by the gain of oppression have dwindled away and become impotent as a nation, being evidently, if the reports of travelers are to be believed, less numerous now than when their crescent glared from the walls of Belgrade, and threatened all Europe with subjugation.

But we need not dwell upon the evidence furnished by other times and other countries; as our own times and native country will afford strong confirmation of the position here stated. It may be observed, however, that the migratory habits of our people, and the extensive trade carried on in slaves between the old and the new states, makes it impossible to ascertain the true rate of natural increase in any particular district. Besides so much of our country is yet new that the preventive check to population does not yet act upon all, or even nearly all the masters with its full force. For these reasons we ought not to expect that any uniform result would be exhibited; and yet by a careful comparison of the different enumerations that have been made of the people, it will clearly appear, that the position here taken is true in relation to the white and colored races in our own country. In Maryland, where from the vicinity to the free States and the unprofitableness of slave labor, a number have been manumitted, some have absconded, and many have been sent to the South, the whites have increased faster than the slaves. For the first period between 1790 and 1800 at the rate of one and eight-tenths per cent. in the ten years. In the second period or next ten years, their increase was two and three-tenths per cent. more than the slaves. The third period from 1810 to 1820 we find an excess of fourteen and

one-tenth per cent.; and the fourth period gives an excess of fifteen and two-tenths per cent. From this we see that the relative number of slaves has diminished considerably in that State.

Virginia is somewhat similarly situated; and accordingly, we find that the whites are now gaining upon the slaves. In the first period, the excess of the slaves increase was but one and two-tenths per cent.; and in the second, six and eight-tenths per cent. In the third period, the whites have an excess of eight-tenths of one per cent., and in the fourth, four and seven-tenths per cent.

In North Carolina the whites have uniformly been behind the slaves in their rate of increase. In the first period, fifteen and two-tenths per cent. Second do., fifteen and nine-tenths per cent. Third do., ten and one-tenth per cent. Fourth do., seven per cent.

In South Carolina the whites appear to have had an excess in the first period of thirteen and two-tenths per cent.; but in the second, the slaves are in excess twenty-five and two-tenths per cent. in their rates of increase. In the third, their excess was twenty per cent., and in the fourth their increase was fourteen per cent. more than the whites.

In Georgia, the excess of the slaves increase in the first period was thirteen and three-tenths per cent.—second do. thirty-two and four-tenths per cent.—third do. eleven and nine-tenths per cent.—in the fourth period, the whites appear to have increased eleven per cent. more than the slaves.

In Kentucky, during the first period, the slaves increased thirty and three-tenths per cent. more than the whites—in the second, nineteen and four-tenths per cent.—third do., twenty-two and seven-tenths per cent.—fourth do., eleven and eight-tenths per cent.

In Tennessee, the excess of slaves in their increase was, in the first period, one hundred and ten and two-tenths per cent.—second do., ninety-two and five-tenths per cent.—third do. twenty-two and five-tenths per cent.—fourth do., nineteen and one-tenth per cent.

It will seen by examining the foregoing statements, that the irregularities in the rate of increase is very great, not

only in different states, but in the same ones at different times, owing principally to the varying currents of emigration, so that general inferences drawn from them alone would be liable to considerable uncertainty. It appears, that the aggregate increase of the slaves in the foregoing states since 1790, has been in a greater ratio than that of the white population, without making any allowance for the diminution of their numbers by emancipation, which appears to have been considerable.

The same general result is aimed at by comparing the increase of the whites and slaves during the last period in the whole of the southern states. In the states of Maryland, Virginia, N. Carolina, S. Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Missouri, the aggregate increase of white population from 1820 to 1830, was at the rate of twenty-nine per cent. That of the slaves in the same states and for the same period, was thirty-one and seven-tenths per cent., showing an excess in the aggregate rate of increase of two and seven-tenths per cent.

The period here included was one of unparalleled prosperity in most of the southern states, owing principally to the great profits arising from the cultivation of cotton; and consequently the planters would meet with less difficulty than usual in providing establishments sufficient to encourage the formation of matrimonial connections. And the great and tempting opportunities of making fortunes, which were presented by the high price of cotton, and the consequent increase of its production, and the various branches of business growing out of it, induced many of our citizens from the Northern and Eastern States to migrate to the South; while the inducements to leave those regions and settle in the free states was less than may reasonably be looked for hereafter. The same circumstances would naturally give rise to greater hardships amongst the slaves, and to greater activity in that trade, which, by tearing them from the scenes of their youth, and violently breaking up the tenderest and most endearing ties of our nature, would cause many a wo-worn creature to descend into a premature grave.

The opening of new lands is also unfavorable to the health of the laborers, and consequently to their power of increase; and considerable diminution has been made to their numbers by emancipation in some of the states, particularly in Kentucky and Tennessee, where the increase of the free blacks has been much greater than what has arisen from procreation only, being upwards of seventy per cent.

If under all these circumstances, favoring the increase of the whites, and depressing that of the slaves, the latter could multiply two and seven-tenths in every hundred more than the whites, what may we not expect under a state of things which is rapidly approaching, when those peculiar encouragements to the increase of the whites shall be done away.

OF THE EFFECTS OF SLAVERY ON NATIONAL CHARACTER AND THE STATE OF SOCIETY.

The system of slavery in the early stages of its progress, furnishes the masters generally with a plentiful supply of the necessaries and conveniences of life. While fertile land is waiting for the hand of man to call forth its treasures, the labour of the slaves can be so directed as to yield a large return of rude or unmanufactured produce. Thus favored by nature, they feel not the toil and hardship of cultivating the soil, and seem to place a low estimate on the common necessaries of life. Hence excessive parsimony is not a sin that easily besets them. They are hospitable and generous, scornful of the petty artifices to which the needy sharper is prone to resort, and possessed of a high, chivalrous sense of honor, which gives brilliancy to their character. Feeling that it does not belong to them to labor for a living, and having the means at their command, the more favored among them cultivate their intellectual powers, to gratify their love of distinction, or as a source of refined pleasure. Hence many of them become well informed men, powerful orators, able statesmen, or formidable commanders. They are not, however, likely to cultivate those arts and sciences which give man a command over the powers of nature, with as

much assiduity as those which will enable them to exercise influence over their fellow men, or excite the wonder and admiration of their cotemporaries. Conceiving themselves born to command, they cultivate those arts that will increase their power; and feeling conscious of their own importance, they assume a lofty bearing in their social intercourse.

Accustomed to the exercise of almost absolute power, they cannot brook any kind of authority over themselves; so that, they naturally acquire high and chivalrous notions of political liberty. So far, indeed, do they carry this feeling, that they esteem the privilege of making slaves of others as among their dearest and most invaluable rights. Nor can they brook on the part of others even discussion respecting the propriety of their conduct in relation to slavery.

These shining qualities, however, (though generally more brilliant than useful) form the fairest side of their character. Noxious and noisome weeds spring up amongst them, and give the impress of odious peculiarities. Familiar with injustice and oppression from their infancy, they learn to disregard the rights of others. Educated in the midst of scenes at variance with their natural sense of justice, they are tempted habitually to disregard the admonitions of conscience; and impatient of control, they are disposed to disregard the restraints of law and order. With these peculiarities, and the host of vices that spring out of them, a large proportion of slave-holders are deeply affected; and consequently they are but poorly qualified to be members of a prosperous and happy community.

But this prosperous state of things cannot long continue. The resources of the slaveholders will be gradually dried up. They will become more and more limited in the command of the necessities and comforts of life, and consequently more and more unable to give their children a liberal education. The general standard of literary attainment will be gradually lowered; till the taste for such pursuits will be in great measure banished from the common walks of life, and general and gross ig-

norance will overspread the land. But the vices of the slave system will continue, and be aggravated by the growing ignorance of the people; so that in process of time the masters will be dragged down from that proud eminence of intellectual superiority in which they have fancied themselves securely seated.— They will become poor, ignorant, and degraded, and thus prepared to associate with their slaves upon terms of equality.

As for the slaves it seems to be agreed on all hands that their situation exposes them in a peculiar manner to degradation. The remark of Homer, that

“Jove fixed it certain, that whatever day

Makes man a slave, takes half his worth away,”

is confirmed by the experience of all ages and nations. In addition to the causes of degradation necessarily connected with their situation, they are subject to the direct efforts of their masters to shut out from their benighted intellect every ray of knowledge that is calculated to increase their power. They are treated as brute beasts, and every effort is made to cause them to assimilate in character to the tribes of inferior animals, as far as it is possible to do it by human means. Thus ignorant and degraded, they are destined to form the larger part of the community; for their greater rate of increase must some time or other place them in the majority. They wax stronger and stronger, while their masters are continually growing weaker and weaker; and they must ultimately impress upon the community to which they belong, the prominent features of their character.

In the progress of events, too, it is impossible to prevent occasional insurrections of the slaves; many of which will be put down by force, and marked, as such things usually are, by scenes of barbarous and ferocious cruelty, at which humanity shudders. These contests will naturally become more frequent as the power of the slaves increase; and they will naturally be more strongly marked with barbarity as the power of the parties approach to equality, and their fears and hopes are strengthened by circumstances; so that all portions of the community will acquire a savage ferocity of character. The accommodations and accomplishments of civilized life will

disappear; scenes of lawless violence will be frequent, and render life and property insecure; a night of barbarism and darkness will overspread the land, and slavery will probably disappear in the general wreck of civilization and refinement.

Such is the natural course of events to which slavery gives rise. In civilized society, it is a disease in the body politic. A state of barbarism is its congenial soil, and to that state it will tend to reduce every people who adopt it as a controlling feature in the constitution of the body politic. Among a barbarous people it is comparatively harmless, unless it is supported by a trade in slaves, as it can neither be of great extent or of long continuance, without such assistance.

Thus was the power of the Roman empire undermined. In the days of its glory, it was rich in brilliant characters. In literature and science it was great, and shone with superior lustre. In arts and in arms it was almost without a rival; and the period of its grandeur still stands conspicuous for the great and splendid achievements of intellectual power which it exhibited. The foundation of its greatness was deeply laid in the industry, intelligence, and valor of its citizens; but in an evil hour they appropriated the wealth and power which they thus acquired, to the purposes of oppression. They procured slaves, and undertook to live on the produce of their labour. The system was extended with the increase of means, till it pervaded the whole social system; and in the time of Augustus, it is estimated that one-half of the inhabitants of the empire were slaves. For a while, a brilliant galaxy of intellects maintained the glory of the Roman name; but the lustre with which it shone gradually faded away. The arts and sciences were neglected; poverty and ignorance increased; the resources of the people became more and more limited, and the power and glory of the empire departed. The Roman name ceased to inspire terror among the rude and hardy barbarians of the north; and they issued forth in swarms to prostrate the tottering remains of that mighty power which had so long kept them in awe. Amid the confusion of this period, (of which the servile insurrections were a

fruitful source,) the small glimmerings of literature and science which still flickered in the neighborhood of the capitol, were extinguished; and a long and dreary night of barbarism and darkness overspread the civilized world. At length, after the lapse of a thousand years, the human mind began slowly to emerge from the deep gloom with which it had been so long enveloped; and the monuments of ancient learning were dragged forth from the heaps of rubbish, where they had long lain neglected, once more to astonish, delight, and instruct mankind.

Egypt, too, the cradle of science, and the avenue through which the light of civilization first shone upon Europe, has long since fallen from its great estate. The splendid ruins that yet survive, and seem to bid defiance to the corroding tooth of time, attest a highly cultivated state of the arts. Individual wealth must be accumulated to a great extent, and general intelligence prevail for a long period among a considerable class of men, before such works as yet exhibit their remains could possibly be executed. Opulence, extensively diffused, must for a long time have been requiring and encouraging artizans of many descriptions to minister to the love of convenience and elegance which wealth naturally inspires, before a body of workmen could be trained, capable of performing such master-pieces of workmanship as appear to have been executed in that country in very ancient times. The conclusion is, therefore, irresistible, that some, at least, of the African nations were in a highly cultivated state, long before science and civilization shed a ray of light upon the land of our forefathers. Whether the inhabitants of those countries were at that time of the black or negro race, is a problem which it is difficult to solve satisfactorily; but there are strong reasons for supposing that at least some of them were; and that the time was, when the white race were ignorant savages, and the black a polished and intelligent people. Be this as it may, it is established by the testimony of history, that this people were extensive holders of slaves, and that Egypt was the great slave market for the marauding hordes that then occupied part of the eastern shore of the Me-

diterranean sea. This is strikingly supported and exemplified by the story of Joseph, who was sold by his brethren to the traders on their way to that market.

From these and similar facts that have been handed down to us, it is reasonable to infer that the slave system grew with the increasing wealth of the people, and formed a controlling feature in their social organization. As a natural consequence, the facts that have taken place would follow. The people became generally poor; the light of science was nearly extinguished; and the arts that embellish the path of life, and furnish a large part of the comforts and conveniences of civilization, were lost to them, perhaps for ever.

The arts, the sciences, and the spirit of civilization, were transplanted into other climes; and the wealth and power which these conferred, raised up other nations in succession. These in turn extended the system of slavery with their increase of wealth; and the consequence was, they shone for a brief space with resplendent lustre, and then faded away into a state of semi-barbarism and ignorance. Africa became the great storehouse for furnishing such countries with slaves. The bones and sinews of her sons became the leading staples of her commerce, and has so continued to this day. And to this circumstance we may rationally attribute the impenetrable gloom that hangs over that benighted continent: a gloom which cannot be dissipated till the accursed traffic shall be proscribed by the more civilized world.

Such are the natural effects of slavery; such the direction it tends to give to the current of successive events, in every age and in every clime; and we need not flatter ourselves that we as a people can escape the common lot of human nature. It is true, there are many counteracting circumstances connected with our condition, that will materially modify the general result, and prevent that entire loss of the blessings of civilization which some other countries have exhibited. But it is not the less true, that slavery tends to produce poverty, ignorance, and barbarism; and that the more

extensive it is in its operation, and the longer it is persevered in, the more fully will those effects be developed.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

As the right of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia has been called in question, it may be allowable to devote a brief space to its examination, notwithstanding the difficulty of conceiving how an intelligent person can entertain any doubts on the subject. By a right, we understand a just and competent authority to exercise discretionary power in the regulating, controlling, or directing of something. The rights of individuals have reference to those things which are rightly and properly placed under their control, and the rights of government have the same relation to the things which properly come under its direction. It is right and proper in the nature of things, that individuals as such should each have a certain sphere of discretion in which their will is law, and in which it is their just privilege, as well as duty, to act as they may think right and proper, without being subject to human control, further than to keep them within their proper limits, and prevent them from encroaching upon the sphere which properly belongs to others. So with government; in whatever hands it may be placed, it has a certain sphere of discretion properly belonging to it, which it cannot transcend without injustice. Hence the rights of government, as well as of individuals, are not arbitrary and variable. They are fixed in the nature of things, and defined by the Creator in the laws which are impressed upon the workmanship of his hand. They are as immutable as the principles of right and wrong on which they rest.

The powers of government are naturally inherent in the majority of the people, and in this country that majority have delegated their authority to certain sets of officers appointed for the exercise thereof, among whom it is distributed as defined in the constitutions of the general and state governments, taken connectively. Hence those constitutions are the legal and proper evidence of the distribution of power, and of the rights belonging to each department of the government;

but it must be borne in mind that they are but the acts of the majority, and they can confer no rights which did not originally belong to that majority.

Having thus defined the nature of rights in general, we will proceed to the particular case before us. The District of Columbia has no local legislature, and hence it is manifest that if the abolition of slavery is a matter which government may rightfully do in any case, it is a subject embraced in the sphere of discretion which it may rightfully and justly exercise, and therefore the right to do it must rest with either the general or state governments. The latter is not pretended. No one contends that an act of the legislature of Maryland, abolishing slavery, (if such should be passed,) would extend in its operation over any part of the District. No such reservation of power was made at the cession of the territory, nor does such a supposition receive any countenance from the terms of the federal constitution. Those, therefore, who deny to Congress the power in question, must hold that it does not belong to government in any shape. That it is a matter with which government has no rightful authority to interfere, and that the privilege of holding slaves is one of the inalienable rights of individuals, a necessary appendage to constitute a freeman. As a consequence of this doctrine, they must also hold that government has no right to enquire into the title by which slaves are held; for, say they, it cannot interfere with the subject without encroaching upon the rights of individuals; and if it has a just authority to settle the principles upon which property in slaves shall rest—if it may define the circumstances necessary to constitute a good title, and extend its protecting arm to all who are not embraced under those circumstances—if these are matters within its rightful sphere of discretion, it certainly has the right to abolish slavery, for it may make those circumstances such that no individual will be embraced under them.

If government may extend its arm for the protection of the man of thirty years of age, who may be seized by ruthless violence, and compelled by the terror of

the lash to labor without recompence, for the benefit of another to whom he owes no obligation, it may do the same to those of any other age, and say that the infant should not be seized in the same way and held as the property of another. If it may say that a white man or red man shall not be held as a slave, may it not extend the same protection to those of any other color. If it may rightfully say that the violent seizing of a man, and compelling him by the fear of corporal punishment to labor for another, does not of itself confer a title to his bones and sinews, it certainly has the same right to say that the additional circumstance of the original wrong doer selling his victim to another, shall not confer a better title, and that the condition of slavery shall not be extended to the children of such unfortunate objects of oppression. If it may go thus far and say, that the seizing of a man in Pennsylvania, New York, Great Britain, or France shall not give a good and sufficient title to the original seisor, or to any person who may purchase of him, may it not extend the same principle to China, Japan, Turkey, or Africa. In short, if it be admitted, that it is a matter proper for government to determine who may be held as slaves—that it has a discretionary power in this respect, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the whole subject is within its proper sphere of discretion. The doctrine which is now contended for by the South amounts, therefore, substantially to this—that government has no just and proper authority to protect any one in their personal liberty, and that as regards it, might constitutes right. A conclusion so monstrous and palpably absurd cannot surely be held as a truth by any one, but it is a legitimate inference from the doctrine that Congress have no power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. It is clear, then, that Congress does possess the power in question, unless it can be shown that some other legislative body possesses the right to perform this act of justice, and this, as above remarked, has not yet been pretended.





